RESTORATION *Review*

A Quarterly Journal of Philosophy of Restoration

Dedicated to the Task of Defining the Restoration of Primitive Christianity as the Spiritual, Moral and Intellectual Ideal of Modern Man

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Editorial . . .

LEROY GARRETT, Editor

"FULL" AND "PARTIAL" FELLOWSHIP

A reader has passed along to me an editorial in the December 21, 1961 *Gospel Advocate* regarding Robert G. Neil and the Brentwood Hills congregation in Nashville. It seems that Brentwood Hills was not exactly orthodox for awhile, and it was therefore eyed suspiciously by the main-line Churches of Christ of the city. It was suspected of premillennialism, so the purpose of the editorial, which is signed by Batsell Barrett Baxter and B. C. Goodpasture, is to give the congregation a clear title to orthodoxy. Brother Neil answers orthodox questions about premillennialism with orthodox answers, and so Baxter and Goodpasture go on record in favor of extending "the right hand of fellowship" to both brother Neil and the congregation.

What interests me most of all about the editorial is the remark, "Since its inception a few years ago this church has been under a cloud of suspicion and has enjoyed only partial fellowship with the other congregations of the area." What is "partial fellowship"? There is no such concept in the New Testament. One enjoys the fellowship of the saints or he doesn't; Christians have fellowship one with another or they don't. This *partial* fellowship notion reveals more than the editors might realize. It makes fellowship mean *approval* or *endorsement,* and it is saying that the congregation at Brentwood Hills was not fully accepted or approved or endorsed by the others. But this is not what fellowship in the New Testament means. If one is "in Christ" he is in fellowship with all others who are Christians. We have no half-brothers in the Lord, and none with whom we have only "partial" fellowship. It is a sectarian notion, one calculated to keep churches in line.

Congregations must *line up* and toe the line of orthodoxy if they want "full" fellowship. This latter term appears repeatedly in another *Gospel Advocate* article (Jan. 31, 1963) by J. D. Thomas. He makes such statements as, "This lets in denominational people to full Christian fellowship . . . " What is the difference between *full* fellowship and fellowship? Notice the reference to denominational people being "let in". Both articles in the *Advocate* indicate that fellowship is some kind of device that men can wield to their own advantage: we "let in" people to *full fellowship;* a congregation that had only *partial fellowship* comes into *Full fellowship* once it gets its nose clean on premillennialism.

I want these brethren to write another editorial or two and explain to less discerning editors like myself what they mean by such distinctions. Who in the New Testament had only "partial fellowship" and which ones "full fellowship"? Who determines this anyhow? I thought a person came into the fellowship of the saints when he

obeyed the gospel and became a Christian. Is fellowship something that fades and reappears according to one's measure of orthodory? "Full fellowship" today but maybe only "partial fellowship" tomorrow, depending upon loyalty to party lines, is that it?

I wonder about another statement in the Baxter-Goodpasture editorial: "For some time the elders of the Brentwood Hills group have let it be known that they would welcome a meeting to clear up any difficulties and to achieve full fellowship with other congregations of the area." There is "full fellowship" again, and with whom is to be enjoyed? The other Nashville congregations. Is this a New Testament concept? Is the *koinonia* into which the Christian is called of God (1 Cor. 1:9) a relationship between congregations? Do the New Testament scriptures speak of *congregations* "fellowshiping" or "disfellowshiping" each other, whether *fully* or *partially?* 1 John 1:3 indicates that fellowship is between *persons* and with *God* and with *Christ.* But one must close his New Testament and turn to editorials in the *Advocate* or to the history of Romanism to read about corporate bodies defining the lines and degrees of fellowship.

While I am at it I might ask what has happened to congregational autonomy? The same editorial tells how certain elders and ministers from various congregations in Nashville got together "to talk about matters of faith and fellowship" and thus decide what might be done to bring Brentwood Hills into "full fellowship."

What does it mean to let a congregation direct its own affairs and settle its own problems? Two things frighten us: one is for someone to say a word against our cherished notion of autonomy; the other is for some congregation to dare to practice it. Congregational autonomy among Churches of Christ is an illusion. In a city like Nashville a congregation must get in line with all the others if it expects to get along. It is just that simple, and it is just that obviously sectarian. We need a truly free and courageous church in Nashville, one more concerned with pleasing the Lord than the *Gospel Advocate.*

SEVEN IMPERATIVES OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

The imperatives may number more than seven, but these seven are indeed imperatives. They apply especially to the disciple brotherhood, meaning the Christian Church-Churches of Christ with their several segments. These "musts" are related to the larger problem of the unity of all the saints in the whole of Christendom, but, like charity, unity begins at home, and we believe the place for us to start in the realization of the Lord's prayer for oneness is with ourselves.

1. *We must face the fact that we ourselves are sectarians.*

Sectarian is not necessarily a bad word, even though we do not intend it as a compliment when we fling it at our religious neighbors. For too long now we have divided the religious world into two parts: the sects and ourselves, implying of course that we are not sectarian.

We can be sectarian without being factious, and so with our neighbors. One may belong to the Baptist Church and be as eager for the unity of the spirit as any of us. One is not a supporter of division and dissension just because he is a Methodist. Surely there

are Presbyterians who pray daily for the unity of the saints, hoping that their own Presbyterian Church will be lost in the oneness of Christ.

This tragic state of division is our heritage. The misfortunes of history were dumped into our laps as if by fate. We did not ask to come into a world riddled with sectarianism. Some of course are satisfied with division, but many are not. Those who are concerned for unity are not sectarians in any bad sense, but only in the sense that they are within the context of partyism. Those who desire to maintain their parties, either because of pride or selfish gain, might well be called heretics. These are the self-condemned (Tit. 3:11) who bring upon themselves swift destruction (2 Pet. 2:1).

We of the disciple brotherhood are sectarians in that we too are within the pale of a distorted and apostate Christianity. This we must realize. Division must be viewed as a common problem shared by us all, and we should hope to work with all churches in overcoming it. It is arrogant for us to suppose that we are *the answer* to partyism. The truth is that our own disciple history has contributed to partyism just as Baptist or Methodist history has.

We can only hope that most of us are concerned over our plight, eager to see our "Church of Christ" and "Christian Church" distinctions lost in ecumenicity. Those of us who are satisfied with our present divided state —and we are divided a dozen or more different ways in our own brotherhood —are other than innocently-involved sectarians. Those who insist on the *status quo,* while branding all others as *sects,* are the heretics who promote and maintain parties for their own ends. "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed." (Titus 1:16).

The Church of Christ-Christian Church brotherhoods have all the elements of denominational structure: our own publishing houses, our own list of preachers (the various groups among us have their own "loyal" list), our own publications, our own colleges and seminaries, our own distinctive names, our own party interpretation of scripture, our own pet practices, our own powers of boycott, etc.

Whether these are right or wrong, we *do* have those things about us that distinguish us from others and that preserve us as a separate denomination or denominations.

The first imperative, therefore, is for us to drop this myth that we are *different* from other sects, and thus are not a sect, and are thereby a kind of panacea for the ills of sectarian division. No sensible man among us can believe that the answer to the problem of partyism in religion is for all denominations to close shop and join us. Which of our several groups would they join? If the answer is for them to fashion their churches after us, which one of our parties is to be the pattern for them?

Once we accept sectarianism for what it is, and realize that we are also part of the problem, we will then be in a position to work intelligently toward a solution.

2. *We must realize that our plea for unity has thus far been little more than a demand for conformity.*

Our people can hardly be thought of as unity-minded people, but rather

as conformity-minded. We are not a part of any unity effort. Not only are we indifferent to the so-called Ecumenical Movement, which may be a reasonable attitude, but we have little concern for any unity effort, except for our own brand of "you be like us" unity. Ours is a call for conformity, not unity.

A plea for unity implies dialogue between the disparate groups. It calls for contact and conversation between those who are divided. It admits that the sin of division is widespread, that we are all more or less guilty, and that we must work together in love in order to overcome partyism. If we assume that we have it made, that we are the restored church, that we are right and there are no further truths about the one church to look for, then of course our plea to the various sects is for them to become like ourselves.

It could hardly be so simple as that. Who among us can believe that it would be *the truth* if someone told the denominational leaders who have labored for decades to promote Christian unity the following: there is a church in the United States, especially in Texas and Tennessee, that is *the real New Testament church; it has restored the original church in faith, doctrine, and practice; our search for a way to unite is over; we have found the way; the answer is for all of us to become like the people known as the Church of Christ or the Christian Church?*

We leave the impression that this is our view. This attitude must be corrected if we are to make any substantial progress toward reform. Those characteristics that distinguish us from others cannot be insisted upon as the basis for unity. Others do not have to adopt our pet name "Church of Christ" or follow our form of worship (our famous *five acts of public worship*) in order to share in a world-wide fellowship of the saints. There is no evidence that a New Testament church wore such a name as "Church of Christ" or practiced such things as congregational singing and passing a collection basket every Sunday.

In the restored church these things that we do that make us different from others may or may not be continued—we may have to give up some things just as others will have to discard some things for the sake of unity—but in no instance can our peculiarities be insisted upon as a basis for fellowship. Let me say that again: *there is nothing that is believed or practiced only by Church of Christ-Christian Church people that can be made a condition for the unity of all believers.*

Surely we have truths that will contribute to the achievement of oneness, but other religious groups have also. If we are conscious of unity, we will share ideas with others and learn from others; if we are merely pleading for conformity, our task will simply be to make it clear to others just what we are so that they may become like us.

3. *We must understand that the so-called Restoration Movement is NOT the church, but rather a movement within the church.*

It is a fallacy to suppose that the Campbells or anybody else restored the church to its pristine glory, so that all we have to do is to bask in the sunlight of truth and invite others to accept the same. The first error in our thinking along this line is to equate a *movement* with the church.

Our pioneers did not confuse this point. They fully understood that the church was already in existence in their day, and that their task was not to restore the church. Their effort was a *movement* within the church, the purpose of which was to restore to the church certain features that they believed to be essential to its maturity.

There is a significant difference here. It is one thing to believe that *we* are *the church* (because our people have restored it) and all others are *outside* the true church; it is another thing to believe we are a part of the church, but so are other true believers, for the church is scattered throughout all Christendom. If we believe the latter, we will see the Restoration Movement as an effort *within* the church, which is scattered and fragmented, to restore to the church some of the original characteristics that have been lost or blurred.

The church can be fragmented and still be the church; it can become decadent and even apostate and still be the church. The church is the body of Christ, the people of God.

We should view our Restoration Movement as an effort to correct the deficiencies. Among the essentials which we seek to restore to the church would be unity itself. The restoration of the institutions of baptism and the Lord's Supper to their proper place would be another. The reformation of the disciples' way of life to lives of holiness would be another.

4. *We must realize that the church of our Lord is not composed of congregations, but of individuals.*

The body of Christ is not made up of so many "loyal" churches. It is not the sum total of the congregations of any particular persuasion. The church at Sardis is called a "dead" church by the Lord himself, even though it had a reputation of being alive. But Jesus says to that congregation:: "Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Surely this is the case in most congregations; i. e., there are *true* disciples of the Lord there. These constitute the body of Christ. The aggregate of them the world over constitute the church of God on earth.

We should not, therefore, classify men by their church connections, for their personal lives may bespeak an attitude toward truth much different from the traditions of their denomination. A man should not be categorized as "Baptist" just because he belongs to the Baptist Church. Even if he acknowledges being a Baptist, he may be a different kind of Baptist from the one we have in mind. Each man should be allowed to stand on his own convictions. Surely the Lord will judge us this way. We are not to suppose that the Christ will judge us as members of the First Baptist Church or as members of the Tenth Street Church of Christ.

It may be that God is displeased with *both* the First Baptist Church and the Tenth Street Church of Christ, as he was with the congregation at Sardis, and yet be pleased with certain ones within those churches, as he was with some at Sardis. We will go to heaven or hell, not as members of certain churches, but as individuals who must give an account to God for their own behavior.

5. *We must accept as brothers in the Lord all those who acknowledge and submit to the Lordship of our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

It is a serious thing for any of us to refuse to accept into the fellowship of the saints him whom the Lord has received. The *New English Bible* gives a helpful rendering of Rom. 14:1: "If a man is weak in his faith you must accept him without attempting to settle doubtful points." If we truly love the Lord, will we not accept those whom the Lord accepts? This verse teaches that I am to accept my brother in the Lord even if there are doubtful points of doctrine in his belief.

When I read Rom. 14:1 I am reminded of the use Alexander Campbell made of the passage before an audience of brethren who were trying to decide whether they should receive Aylett Raines into their fellowship. He had been immersed by Walter Scott, but he held views that were then called "Restorationist," which were that the wicked would be restored to peace by God after a period of punishment. This view was held by numerous ones in those days, and the disciples viewed it as an injurious heresy. Many were adamant in their view that Raines should not be received, and especially that he should not be used by the churches, even though he proved to be a highly talented man.

We cannot tell the whole story here, but it was at an annual meeting of the Mahoning Association that Thomas Campbell said the following about the controversial Aylett Raines:

> Brother Raines has been with me during the last several months, and we have freely unbosomed ourselves to each other. He is philosophically a Restorationist and I am a Calvinist, but notwithstanding this difference of opinion between us, I would put my right hand into the fire and have it burnt off before I would hold up my hands against him.
>
> And from all I know of Brother Raines, if I were Paul, I would have him, in preference to any young man of my acquaintance, to be my Timothy. (*Memoirs*, 2, p. 245)

Imagine a brother today in our straight-laced brotherhood feeling free enough to admit that he is a Calvinist as Thomas Campbell did, and then to speak up in favor of one accused of heresy! It was in this free setting that the Restoration Movement enjoyed its early growth.

At that same meeting Alexander Campbell referred to Rom. 14:1 as the reason why brother Raines should be received. To complete the story we should add that Raines made an outstanding contribution to the movement, and he testified later in life that it was the charitable spirit of the Campbells that saved him from the error that was then held in question, for he finally gave up the error.

The exacting and legalistic brethren who insist that others must agree with their interpretations before fellowship is extended should heed the example of the Campbells. Thomas Campbell said he would rather have his hand burned off than to reject a brother. Too many of us today have a much different spirit. If a man is my brother —and he *is* my brother if he is a baptized believer—then I should receive him as the Lord has received him.

The reason the Campbell movement did not splinter off into several factions during the nineteenth century is because of their liberal view of fellowship. It is the austerity and lack of

love towards one another that continues to divide us in every generation since the Campbells.

6. *We must distinguish between the fellowship of saints, which is based upon the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the endorsement (or approval) of a brother's opinions and interpretations, which are based upon doctrine.*

We must not forget that fellowship is between *persons,* not *things.* It is *persons* that are "in Christ" and that is where fellowship is (1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9). Things like organs, radio programs, colleges, missionary societies are irrelevant to the question of fellowship. All those "in Christ" are in fellowship with each other and with Christ. As each one draws closer to Christ he is drawn closer to the others who draw nigh unto him.

Endorsement of a brother's doctrinal position is a different thing. We have already seen from Rom. 14:1 that we may receive each other "without attempting to settle doubtful points." There will be those who do not *endorse* or *approve of* missionary societies, but they can still have fellowship—not with the missionary society, for fellowship is not with *things*—with the missionary that the society sends forth, or with those who use such societies to do the Lord's work.

It is God who calls us into the fellowship of his Son (1 Cor. 1:9). It is not our prerogative, therefore, to determine the bounds of fellowship between brethren. God takes care of that. I merely *acknowledge* the fellowship that exists in Christ, and I am to accept (with great thanksgiving) the saintly fellowship that is provided in Christ. It is sinful for me to do otherwise. While I may not endorse a brother's position, and may not even endorse the brother as a sound teacher, I can still accept the brother, as the Campbells accepted Raines, and bear with him and help him. This is the meaning of Christian fellowship. No fellowship can exist when brethren are heresy-hunters, suspicious of each other, and ready to cut each other down at the first infraction of some rule.

It is true that there are situations in which fellowship is not possible. One situation was at Corinth in the case of a brother who had his father's wife; another was the case of the heretic in Titus 3:10. But check this proposition: *fellowship between saints need never be impaired so long as there is a sincere effort to do what is right.* This holds true irrespective of how wrong one might get in his doctrinal views. I am to save him from his erroneous views by accepting him. If Christ died for him, I can receive him, without endorsing his views. This is love.

7. *We must make nothing a test of fellowship that God has not made a condition for going to heaven.*

We encourage division when we refuse to accept a brother simply upon the basis of his relationship to Christ. Too often we issue our own conditions, claiming of course that our stipulations are simon-pure biblical interpretations. All of us of course are *loyal,* and we have our standards of loyalty by which we measure those who would be one of us.

Just think of the many things that are made tests of fellowship within "Church of Christ" ranks! These are arbitrary man-made, stereotyped devices that alienate brethren. While

these "dis-fellowshiping" practices are often propogated and preserved by well-meaning brethren who are desperate to be *loyal,* they are nonetheless vicious and destructive to Christian fellowship. Brethren simply have no right to draw lines that exclude those whom Christ receives. It is a serious matter when one brother will not receive another brother.

The turns that such practices take are sometimes ludicrous as well as pathetic. I have on several occasions enjoyed meaningful fellowship with various brethren of different segments of discipledom in private gatherings, but these same men are not free to express that same sense of oneness in any public way. In the privacy of our homes we can pray together, dine together, and open our hearts to each other as we discuss mutual problems, but at the public assembly they must resort to the usual practice of "drawing the line" on all who are not loyal.

I say it is sometimes amusing as well as sad to witness such frustrations, for it is all so obviously contradictory. I have spent hours with men in my home where the finest spirit of fellowship prevailed, only to accompany them to one of their meetings where they are compelled to treat me like an outsider. It is not an infrequent experience for some brother to call on one of the regular praying members *twice* in the same service, due to a shortage of those who can pray publicly, rather than to call on me—even after joyous fellowship together just prior to the service! It appears that they sometime find a convenient *out* by having some other brother call on somebody to lead the prayer, knowing of course that he will not and cannot call on me, or anyone else that is not loyal to that particular faction of discipledom.

Yet I understand quite well, and my friends in the various segments know that I understand. Sometimes they express regrets that it cannot be otherwise. Our movement is so fragmented and lines are so sharply drawn that brethren are not free to have fellowship with *all* Christians. We have fellowship only with those who agree with us *on those things that distinguish us as a separate group,* whether it be anti-this or pro-that. For some reason public prayer, or I suppose any kind of public expression, is a symbol of this acceptance or rejection. The various "Church of Christ" sects just do not call on any man who is outside the prescribed lines. Since I have declared my independence of all partyism among us, it is rare for me to be called on for anything when I visit the assemblies of the various factions as I often do, the so-called "premillennial wing" being a notable exception. Those brethren simply are not as sectarian as most of the rest of us.

Yet I find it increasingly the case that leaders of the several groups will talk with me and share with me their inner struggles since they can no longer talk with each other. In many communities today our own people are so badly divided that they no longer speak to each other. They are busy stealing sheep from each other, and their chief concern seems to be the digressions of each other. In my own hometown of Denton, Texas this is the case. I can enjoy some measure of fellowship with all of them, while they themselves are in a fratricidal struggle. My rule is a simple one: *to make nothing a test of fellowship that God has not made a condition for going to heaven.* I can love them all, and yet, if need be, disagree with them all. They are my brethren because they are first of all Christ's. We are his together, despite all our frailties and faulty thinking. We are all sinners together. For this reason I accept every man who loves Jesus Christ as my brother. If there are any lines drawn, I want to be sure that I draw none of them.

"How blest are the peacemakers; God shall call them his sons."

DILLY-DALLYING IN THE PERIPHERY

I could talk about philosophy in this editorial, showing how it might be defined as a concern for "the things that matter most." But some of my brethren are afraid of philosophy and philosophers, and occasionally I am asked how I can claim to be both a professor of philosophy and a professor of Christianity. I sometimes point out to them that philosophers were among the first to learn that the Christ had been born, and they showed such concern for this event that they traveled across a large part of the then known world to honor the new born king, and proceeded to protect the child when his life was endangered.

These *magi* or wise men were a philosophical school of the Orient who gained wisdom by studying the heavens, a practice that goes all the way back to Plato, who made astronomy and mathematics required studies for the young philosophers of his Academy. So these philosophers found out that the Christ had been born by watching the heavens—"We have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." If philosophy was able to find the Christ in the stars, while many people cannot find him even with their New Testament open before them, then perhaps we should be willing to let philosophy lead us to new heights in Christian study.

I am about to say that Christian philosophy might at least lead us in from the periphery. But I am not really going to talk about philosophy. I simply want to quote something from Plato: "Nothing could be more contrary than pettiness to a mind constantly bent on grasping the whole of things, both divine and human." The old wise man was giving qualifications for the philosophic mind: *pettiness and concern for the great ideas simply do not go together,* he is saying. Little minds are content with the periphery; they are willing to make much ado about nothing. It is the mind that is "constantly bent on grasping the whole of things" that grows discontent with dilly-dallying in the periphery.

During a time that Albert Schweitzer describes as the most dangerous period in human history, the one and only true church (so we are expected to believe) is giving a handsome portion of its time and attention to such issues as institutionalism and instrumental music. One only needs to thumb through our "Church of Christ" journals to see that our editors busy themselves with such questions as the scripturalness of orphan homes and radio and TV programs. In a day when the nations of earth are on the brink of disaster and are thus in need of some Isaiahs and Jeremiahs to weep for them and urge them towards God, many of our brethren sincerely believe that the crucial issue facing the people of God is "the sponsoring church."

We are like the pussy cat who went to London to visit the queen, but who ended up chasing a mouse from under a chair. If we are indeed God's people, if we are truly his kingdom on earth—yea, if we are his only true church (and do not these fantastic claims concern you?)—then should we not be the most dynamic force for good in this troubled world? Should we not be involved in the world's present trauma as Micah and Amos were in their day? Should we not be a great reservoir of spiritual strength for the leaders of nations? And should we not even produce from our ranks some Christian statesmen to guide the governments of earth?

Where are the poets, philosophers, artists, men of letters, great teachers and preachers that we have produced? Surely the only people God has on earth could do better than we have done along this line! Not only have we not produced, dilly-dallying around as we do, we have even obstructed the way of those who dare to do something. Let a brother get a real education and we begin to eye him with suspicion; let him associate with other Christians (oh, excuse the slip—if he associates with *the sectarians*) and we brand him; let him get off the beaten path and we call him names. A man becomes a heretic, you know, when he begins to teach other than the way we believe!

But that is not all. The brotherhood journals will openly oppose any efforts to get our divided groups together for unity talks. It is apparently disloyal to be a part of any unity movement.

While the world is in peril we dilly-dally. Though we sit in the house of royalty, we chase mice. And all the while we call each other bad names and disfellowship each other. The rancor among us so disturbed a brother in Abilene that he penned an article for *Firm Foundation* on "This Disfellowshipping Mania." Among other things he said, "Perhaps the grimmest part of the tragedy is the quiet, steady exodus of disillisioned young people who leave the church. Many of my acquaintances have left." He goes on to describe those who left as "the intellectual and spiritual cream of their congregations' youth who cared too much instead of caring too little."

This judgment is consistent with the observation of Professor Robert Meyers who wrote in *Restoration Review* that the "rebels" at the Church of Christ colleges who leave the church in rather substantial numbers are "among the brightest and most promising." Why are we losing many of our brightest young men? Bright young men and women like to think, and they do think. The "Church of Christ" does not permit free thinking. The worst thing that can happen to our young people is for them to get a real liberal arts education. These young intellectuals of ours are leaving because they must choose between dilly-dallying in the periphery and being heretics (or modernists, or compromisers, or unsound, or something) among their own brethren.

I could not help but think of these conditions among us while reading recently a book about the Scottish theologian James Denney, entitled *God Loves Like That!* The title is taken from Denney's habit of pointing his audience to the cross and saying "God loves like that!" Though he was one of the great conservative theologians

of Europe and so very scholarly (he mastered seven languages and knew all of Shakespeare's tragedies by heart!), he is described as "the most unworldly, unselfish, retiring of men, and was in a manner forced to the front." He so greatly loved Christ. The cross was the center of all his thinking. It is said of him, "He lived in and loved the world and personalities disclosed in the New Testament."

He could quote the New Testament in Greek as well as he could in English, and even though he knew "all there was to know about modern Biblical criticism," he still had strong faith in the supernatural aspects of revelation. He believed in *the grace of God,* which made him the pious man that he was. He was fond of saying, "The New Testament is the most free-thinking book in the world," and he talked about what daring free-thinkers Paul and John were. He said no apostle ever *remembered* Christ, for to them the Christ was ever present. It is not what Christ did that should so concern us, but what he *does,* not what he was, but what he *is.*

Denney read Scripture as if listening for a Voice. Christ stands alone in all history and at the center of history. To be a Christian is to take Christ at his own estimate. The church's chief end is to win men through the testimony of God's redeeming love in Christ. He also spoke often of the Holy Spirit: "It is by the gift of the Holy Spirit that the exalted Lord carries on His work on earth; He is with us through the Spirit, and in the work of the Spirit the ends are being secured for which Jesus lived and died."

Denney was a theologian at the University of Glasgow, but he was a university man who insisted on taking the great theological truths to the common people ("preaching and theology should never be divorced"). He was a great preacher before an audience because he could move men to see what Christ does for them. "The simplist truth of the Gospel and the profoundest truth of theology must be put in the same words: *He bore our sins!*"

He preached the love of God! He was intense and passionate in his consern for Christ. A Cambridge professor said of Denney: "He was one of the very few men I have ever seen at white heat over what Christ has done for the world."

Let me insist that it is this kind of emphasis that our people need today. We have a moral obligation to be intelligent, and more than that we need the kind of love that Denney must have had. If more of our people should see that we are under grace and not law, and that it is the love and mercy of God that saves us and not our works! It is the Christ who is our savior and it is he who is to be glorified in our lives and not what we call the "Church of Christ." Let us be in *white heat* in our love for God's unspeakable gift. Let more of our men stand before our assemblies and passionately and intensely point to the cross as the answer for a troubled world. Let them point to the cross and cry out, "God loves like that!"

BILLIE SOL AGAIN

Since my editorial on "The Church of Billie Sol Estes" the brother from Pecos has been convicted of swindling and has been given a prison term. He has appealed to a higher court.

In the meantime Billie Sol is busy

evangelizing as a "lay preacher" for the Church of Christ, so say the news media. My hometown paper, the *Denton Record-Chronicle,* recently pictured Estes on its front page, showing him in a Church of Christ pulpit with a table in the foreground having words inscribed that read *In Remembrance of Me.* Under the picture it said: "Billie Sol Estes, Pecos rancher who touched off a nationwide scandel and was convicted in a fertilizer storage swindle, told a church fund-raising program in Indianapolis Wednesday night that repentance is essential to religious salvation. Estes will continue his appearances on behalf of Church of Christ mission work today in Cleveland."

The newsmagazines, *Newsweek* at least, have carried similar pictures and stories of Estes' work among the Church of Christ as a lay minister. Insofar as I have been able to tell the brotherhood journals remain conspicuously silent about the whole Estes affair. The *Firm Foundation* recently editorialized on "Our Moral Decline," but there was no reference to any particular guilt on the part of Church of Christ folk and certainly no reference to Billie Sol, which of course is all right. Not even did C. E. McGaughey allude in any way to the Estes problem in his *Firm Foundation* report regarding his evangelistic work for the church in Pecos.

We have since had a newcomer to the Estes story—John Paul Dunn, the Pecos physician who claims to be the one who first told on Estes. He has gone to court in an effort to remain on the staff at the local hospital, which is out to dismiss him, apparently because of his involvement in the Estes affair. Dunn too is a member of the Pecos Church of Christ, and the newspapers keep us informed on how the two men are able to worship together (and even sit together) at the local Church of Christ.

All this puts me to thinking. If Estes and Dunn can sit together and worship together, and if they can still get along in the Church of Christ without getting disfellowshipped, why does that same church get in such a stew over somebody that believes in premillennialism or happens to sing hymns to an organ or piano.

And if Estes can continue as a "lay minister" in good standing in the Church of Christ, and even stand behind "the communion table" and raise money for our missionaries—all this while under conviction for swindling and with a prison term hanging over his head—then what is there that is so bad about men like R. H. Boll or Carl Ketcherside, or even Yater Tant.

"I now write that you must have nothing to do with any so-called Christian who leads a loose life, or is grasping, or idolatrous, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a swindler. You should not even eat with any such person." (1 Cor. 5:11 N.E.B.) The swindler is not to be within the fellowship of the church, Paul says. Yet the Church of Christ publicly uses a nationally-known swindler! That same church will not use publicly any good, pious brother who is in doctrinal disagreement. A condemned swindler can preach for them, but some respectable brother who happens to use instrumental music at his own congregation cannot preach for them But, after all, 1 Cor. 5:11 is not particularly a "Church of Christ" passage, and besides Estes is otherwise a good Church of Christer. Had Estes happened to have been an *anti* of some kind, there would have been good reasons for rejecting him, including swindling. But when a swindler is on your side and swindles for the good of the cause, the case is different.

It just may be that if Estes has to go to prison, the Church of Christ might be able to arrange with the Texas Prison System for Estes to be given temporary leaves of absence in order to raise money for the one and only New Testament church on earth, the church that is to be pure and holy and without blemish, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Perhaps we are asked to believe that brother Estes has repented. I hope so, and that would be very fine indeed. The same book that calls for repentance calls for the proper fruits of repentance. Only an immature and morally insensitive people could use a notorious swindler, yea even one under conviction and awaiting the call to prison as well as further trials for perjury and fraud, in the Christian pulpit where only holy men of God should stand. If Estes has repented, well and good. But let him sit back and drink from the bitter dregs of remorse for what he has done to both his God and his nation. What effrontery it takes, what arrogance it displays, what insensitivity to morality and piety it demonstrates to put such a man before a Christian congregation. If Estes has indeed repented, it is now high time that the church of Billie Sol repents.

The prophets of old spoke out when things stank. We need them with us today to tell us that this whole thing stinks. I am disgusted with a brotherhood that can fellowship a swindler and at the same time reject godly men who happen to hold different opinions. The church that can fellowship a Billie Sol Estes can crucify an R. H. Boll. This whole thing stinks to high heaven.

OUR EAGER DEUTSCHER

September 9, 1962, was a lovely day at crowded Idlewild International Airport in New York. The Everett Gibbs family had driven me to New York from Bridgeport, Conn., where I had been engaged in Christian work. It was my first visit to this famous airport. The jungle of people, network of buildings, congestion of cars, planes roaring in and out in all directions seemed to confuse me. I had instructions to meet an agent of the International Social Service at the top of the main escalator in the New Arrivals Building. Since it was Sunday this early afternoon date had been a race with the clock all the way from church in Bridgeport. I was to be there an hour early—quite a chore for me. The New Arrivals Building itself was not easy to find; then a particular escalator; then a particular young woman. I was sure I would never find her among so many people. It was the proverbial needle in the haystack all over again. But she was to have an ISS band on her arm, and she'd be watching for me at the precise moment, so maybe I could find her.

All this fuss was over a five-year-old boy. He was to arrive—after three years of waiting—from Germany. The instructions stated he would arrive on Air India, flight 115, at 2:45 p.m. The ISS agent was to give me further instructions and then take me to the

plane to meet my new son. Since the little boy was stepping out into a world so different from his life in a Roman Catholic orphanage, the ISS insisted that I be on hand for further briefings.

I found the right escalator, I thought, but there was no woman with an ISS band on her arm. I waited and waited, then I re-checked to make sure I had the right escalator and the right building, then I began to ask attendents if they had seen a stray ISS representative, a familiar figure in the New Arrivals terminal. Already I was uneasy, but I became frantic when I heard the announcement that Air India, flight 115, was arriving at a certain gate. It turned out that the instructions sent to me from the International Social Service had given the time of arrival an hour later than it really was, so I was late after all!

I scampered downstairs to the customs area and through a door marked "Positively No Admittance." I explained to the customs officer at the desk that I was about to have a new son, and that I feared the little fellow might have to arrive in his new world without anybody around that cared. Little boys from Germany or not, I could not go back into the area where immigrants were checking in. But I would not take no for an answer. Finally he agreed that an officer might accompany me, and the two of us could search for the little Deutscher.

People were coming through the customs counters in droves. Bags and parcels were checked for content. But there were no little boys from Germany that I could tell. Perhaps if I could get to the plane itself, I thought . . . but it was already unloaded, and besides no one was allowed, not even me. The officer had me wait while he checked at a room where immigrant children are sometimes kept. I waited only a few minutes, but it seemed like hours. Too, I felt a little like being in a fish bowl, for the whole area was circled overhead by a large gallery of viewers. There was a lot of drama in the customs area.

The officer returned with a woman with an ISS band on her arm — and a little boy at her side.

There he stood with his red beret, tweed suit, high-top shoes, trench coat and a small canvas bag of clothes — all of which looked sufficiently German. He was smaller than I thought he would be. He was of course a blond, with fair complexion and distinct features. His eyes were a lovely blue, but they looked sad. He appeared to be at ease; he seemed to know what was going on. I was sure the nuns had properly briefed him on what to expect. Yet he said nothing. He had stepped out into a big world and he was taking it in. He was busy looking at everything around him, giving as little attention as possible to those around him. He did not smile, neither did he speak; he just looked at everything he could.

He had such few belongings with him that the customs officer figured he must have another bag. "Ist das alles?" he asked him. The boy nodded that it was, still preserving his silence. The ISS agent handed me his passport and other papers and the officer gave him a customs clearance (without checking his little bag) right there on the spot so that he would not have to go through the long line. They turned the boy over to me and hurried away

to attend to other matters in their busy world.

Two people who were so unlikely to have ever crossed each other's path had indeed met in a busy airport in the world's largest city. It was dramatic since they were meeting as father and son. While we were incapable of understanding each other's language (except a very little German on my part), I sensed that he was fully aware that he had at last met his new father — indeed, the only father he ever had. I managed to say a few greetings in his native tongue, including assurances that I loved him and that I was his *papa.* He still said nothing, but this time there was a slight smile. I knew he understood and I believed then that he would make his change without difficulty. Ouida and I had been concerned about the adjustment problems, especially since we had been so long getting him.

Everett Gibbs had come along with me in order to serve as interpreter. His long years in Germany gave him an acquaintance with both the language and the people. We all had lots of fun together, the Gibbs' and the Garretts, while we awaited our flight to Dallas. Everett talked and talked to the newcomer, but still he opened not his mouth (let me assure you that time has changed that!), but his slight smiles became big ones, and those in turn to lusty laughter. I was not sure whether he was laughing at Everett's syntax or his antics, but it was obvious enough that the little orphan was both understanding and enjoying his new friend.

At the Dallas airport he accepted an embrace from his new mother with less enthusiasm than he showed for airplanes, lights, building, and things. He was forced by his instinct for self-preservation to pay attention to the attack from his new brother and sister. He viewed their presents and presence with Stoic tranquility. He still said nothing all the way to his home in Denton. But he did fall off to sleep, for after all, in changing worlds he had missed a night's sleep. Again I sensed drama as I eyed the scene in the back seat of the car: two little orphans eyeing a third one with creative wonder. There are three children, I thought, from different parts of the world, who were not likely ever to meet each other, but here they are becoming brothers and sister. I wondered what would happen, trusting that it was better this way for the three of them than the way it was before. Life takes interesting turns, doesn't it?

Herbert Eickstaedt has had his sixth birthday since becoming a Texas cowboy. He is understanding more and more English, but he still does most of his communicating in German. This has had its amusing moments. A neighbor boy, who had no concept of a foreigner, proceeded to play with little Herb just as he did the others. Herb began to bombard him with German—good strong doses of it. The neighbor boy was bewildered. He ran to me and complained, "I can't understand him!"

Christmas is different with a bit of Germany in the house. Herb has all of us singing *Tannen Baum.* He has his own room, his own tricycle, and he attends nursery at Texas Woman's University, where he has become the inspiration for special projects in German customs. We are trying to preserve his native culture by reading him stories in German.

He is a quiet, gentle lad, and well-disciplined. While in New York I had to leave him a moment to make a call. I placed him in the chair where I wanted him to stay, and said, "Bleips du hier, Herbert." I walked a way and paused a moment behind a column to see what he would do. While his eyes went to and fro about his new world, he hardly moved an inch from the position in which I placed him. This kind of German military discipline continued all that evening. I thought to myself how I hated to take him home and ruin him! But he continues to be well-mannered and obedient. His sad, blue eyes attract the girls. An airline hostess was puzzled that they'd ever let such a darling boy leave Germany. Girls at college and at church smother him. We have a little trouble with people heaping too much attention upon our German son and not enough on our Indian and our Greta Garbo.

His most winning trait, however, is his zest for life. Hence my reference to *our eager Deutscher.* I have never seen such *aliveness.* Life is one great thrill to him—everything, even taking a bath! And food . . . one simply would not believe that a skinny little boy could eat so much, and with such delight. When *mama* (he says it in German) prepares pancakes he literally dances with joy. When he plays, he plays with enthusiasm. In church he sits like a trained dog, which embarrasses me—if you know what I mean! How he loves to go, to do anything, and he even sleeps quite like no one else. He demonstrates to me that some people are simply more alive than others.

I found a note among his things from a nun at St. Antoniusheim (St. Anthony's Orphanage) in Karlsruhe, kindly requesting information as to how Herbert is adjusting to his new home in America. I wrote her that he was a wonderful little boy and that we were pleased with him, but that he was a bit sneaky. He steals out of bed at night and roams the house; he wanders into neighbor's houses; and he is not always truthful. But such is the way with little boys and big ones too. All in all he is a delightful lad, and I commended the sisters for the good job they had done. I explained that he had already climbed right into our hearts and that he is now one of us.

Speaking of the good job the sisters did, you might imagine how impressed I was when Herbert's school teacher, who entertained him one evening at her home, told me the following incident. She drove Herbert around Denton to show him the Christmas lights, and she took him to the Presbyterian Church to show him a *live* scene of the Christmas story. Inside the church a temporary altar had been set up for a wedding, and it was still there off to one side when Herbert was taken into the building. The teacher explained that the little boy left her and made a beeline for that altar. There he knelt quietly for awhile, apparently saying his prayers. It surprised the teacher. It sobered me.

Only yesterday I had this little boy who will soon become Philip Herbert Garrett in my lap, explaining to him that someday he might return to his native Deutschland and be another Martin Luther or somebody. He wasn't sure what all that meant, but as usual he was delighted. Bless their hearts, that would really be a good one on the nuns, wouldn't it?

by JIMMY LUMPKIN

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky is not to be numbered among the reformers of the church nor is he a part of our own restoration movement. He belongs to a long list of Russian literary geniuses, numbering from Tolstoy to Pasternak, who gave protest to society's despiritualizing of man which inevitably leads to the loss of human freedom. But we feel that the ideas of Dostoyevsky are important to those interested in a continuing reformation for apart from man's mental and spiritual freedom true religion can never live. It is the author's hope that this article will introduce the Russian novelist to the readers of this journal and will point out such emphasis in Dostoyevsky that are of value in contemporary Christianity.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky was born in Moscow in 1821. His father was a doctor at the charity hospital. Here Dostoyevsky became intimately acquainted with sickness, poverty, death, and despair all of which become recurring themes in his novels. At seventeen Dostoyevsky was sent to a military engineering school in St. Petersburg. By the time he had finished his training at military school Dostoyevsky had decided on a literary career. In 1845 his first book, *Poor Folk,* was published. In this novel Dostoyevsky reveals his profound insight into the personality of the downtrodden and shows his own sensitivity to human suffering. Two illustrations will be sufficient reflections of this:

> Poor people are touchy — that's in the nature of things. I felt that even in the past. The poor man is exacting; he takes a different view of God's world, and looks askance at every passer-by and turns a troubled gaze about him and looks to every word, wondering whether people are not talking about him, whether they are saying he is ugly, speculating about what he would feel exactly, what he would be on this side and what he would be on that side, and everyone knows, Varinka, that a poor man is worse than a rag and can get no respect from anyone . . .[1]

> Between four and five this morning Gorshkov's little boy died . . . I went to see these Gorshkovs. Oh, my dear soul, how poor they are! And what disorder! And no wonder; the whole family lives in one room, only divided by a screen for decency. There was a little coffin standing in the room already — a simple little coffin, but rather pretty; they bought it ready-made; the boy was nine years old, he was a promising boy, they say. But it was pitiful to look at them, Varinka! The mother did not cry, but she was so sad, so poor. And perhaps it will make it easier for them to have got one off their shoulders; but there are still two left, a baby and a little girl, not much more than six. There's not much comfort really in seeing a child suffer, especially one's own little child, and having no means of helping him! The father was sitting in a greasy old dress suit on a broken chair. The tears were flowing from his eyes . . . The little girl, their daughter, stood leaning against the coffin, such a poor little, sad, brooding child! And, Varinka, my darling, I don't like it when children brood; it's painful to see![2]

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[1]Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes From Underground, Poor People, The Friend of the Family,* translated by Constance Garnett and introduction by Ernest Simmons (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1960), p. 217.
[2]*Ibid.,* p. 192.

Like Amos of old Dostoyevsky was sensitive to the great injustices of his society and spoke out in protest. He saw the czars living in luxury while many of their subjects were on the verge of starvation, and he observed the wealthy landlords gaining their wealth by the unfair treatment of the peasants. In protest to these conditions Dostoyevsky joined a secret, revolutionary, literary organization. He and twenty others of the organization were arrested and sent to prison in Siberia. Dostoyevsky spent four years of his life in prison where he had contact with the most depraved of humanity. In *The House of the Dead* he describes men like Orlov:

> He was a criminal such as there are few, who had murdered old people and children in cold blood — a man with a terrible strength of will and proud consciousness of his strength.[3]

Probably of most interest to the reader of Dostoyevsky, an atheist, while on the way to Siberia was given a copy of the New Testament. While in prison he wrote to the woman who had given the New Testament and expressed his impression of the Christ and his own desire to believe:

> I am a child of unbelief and doubt even now and (as I well know) I shall be to the grave. What fearful suffering this desire to believe has caused me and still causes me as it increases in strength in my soul as the contrary proofs multiply! However, God sends me at other times many minutes during which I am entirely at peace . . . and during such minutes I have composed for myself a confession of faith . . .; this is it: to believe that there is nothing more beautiful, more profound, more sympathetic, more reasonable, more manly and perfect than Christ, and not only nothing like Him exists, but I say to myself with jealous love, that it even cannot exist. And even more: if someone were to prove to me that Christ is not the truth, I would rather remain with Christ than with the truth.[4]

Contrary to his expectations, Dostoyevsky did become a believer and from that time on he measured all ideas and institutions by the criterion of his knowledge of Christ.

It is from Christianity that Dostoyevsky derives his concept of radical human freedom. He became a believer because he chose to believe, but he saw that man is also free to disbelieve. Thus, in *The Possessed,* Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch underwent Dostoyevsky's conversion experience in reverse. He believed in Christ but later became an atheist. Shatov asks him:

> But didn't you tell me that if it were mathematically proved to you that the truth excludes Christ, you'd prefer to stick to Christ rather than to truth?[5]

Man is free to become what he chooses to become. He can use his freedom for good or for bad, for his own spiritual advancement or for his own destruction. As man has freedom to believe or disbelieve so also he has freedom of conduct. The choosing of evil rather than good is illustrated in the figure of Ivan Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov* and in the diary of the principal character of *Notes From Underground.* The hero of the last mentioned novel confesses:

> . . . I am a blackguard, . . . the nastiest, stupidest, and most envious of all the worms on earth. . . .[6]

[3]Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The House of the Dead,* Trans. by Constance Garnett (London: William Heinemann, 1915), p. 52.
[4]Matthew Spinka, *Christian Thought from Erasmus to Berdyaev* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), pp. 196-197.
[5]Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed,* Trans. by Constance Garnett (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1959), p. 267.

But he deliberately chooses not to improve his filthy situation in life. In *The House of the Dead* the men in prison freely admit "the devil must have worn out three pairs of shoes before he brought us all here,"[7] but they choose to continue in their evil ways.

As evil comes into men's lives because they choose the evil so good comes as the result of choosing the good. For Dostoyevsky there was only one completely good man—Christ. Christ was an ideal realized but once in the history of man; but sometimes Dostoyevsky uses the ideal of Christ in presenting a really good man. This Christ-like character is presented in the form of Tikhon in *The Possessed,* Aloyosha Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov,* and in Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot.* All of these men have weaknesses for there was but one perfect man, but their greatness is to be found in the degree to which they measure up to the ideal of Christ. They are good men because they choose the good and reject the evil.

This emphasis on freedom in Dostoyevsky is in direct contrast to Marx's philosophy of economic determinism which was gaining ground in his day. It was Marx's philosophy which was the ground and cornerstone of the Russian revolution. At first Dostoyevsky was in favor of the revolution, but gradually he concluded that as bad as the government of the czars was, the ideals of the revolutionists were even worse. He became the revolution's greatest opponent. He frequently characterizes the revolution as standing for the worst types of crime and vice.

> So far as I am able to see and able to judge, the whole essence of the Russian revolutionary idea lies in the negation of honour.[8]

From Vehovensky's speech in *The Possessed* we hear of the supporters of the revolution:

> I've reckoned them all up: a teacher who laughs with children at their God and at their cradle is on our side. The lawyer who defends an educated murderer because he is more cultured than his victims and could not help murdering them to get money is one of us. The schoolboys who murder a peasant for the sake of sensation are ours. The juries who acquit every criminal are ours. The prosecutor who trembles at a trial for fear he should not seem advanced enough is ours, ours. Among officials and literary men we have lots, and they don't know it themselves.[9]

Dostoyevsky attacked the Communist revolution because he viewed it as essentially immoral in its means and goals and because he saw it as an enemy of human freedom.

Because of his belief in the freedom of man Dostoyevsky shows himself to be an enemy of any institution or system which tends to take away from man's freedom. As such he stands opposed to Roman Catholicism as to the Russian revolution. In *The Idiot* Dostoyevsky has his hero, Prince Myshkin, speak out against Catholicism as an unChristian religion:

> The pope seized the earth, an earthly throne, and grasped the sword; everything

[6]Dostoyevsky, *Notes From Underground,* p. 133.
[7]Dostoyevsky, *The House of the Dead,* p. 11
[8]Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed,* p. 389.
[9]*Ibid.,* p. 437

> has gone on in the same way since, only they have added to the sword lying, fraud, deceit, fanaticism, superstition, villainy. They have trifled with the most holy, truthful, sincere, fervent feelings of the people; they have bartered it all for money, for the base earthly power.[10]

A similar attack is given in *The Possessed.*[11] The idea that Catholicism fell into the temptations of Satan which Christ overcame is developed in the inquisition scene, "The Grand Inquisitor," of *The Brothers Karamazov.*[12] Here Catholicism deliberately sets itself against the freedom of man. It preaches a salvation by compulsion and holds out a false promise for which men come and exchange their freedom. In reality Dostoyevsky is here attacking the Communist revolution under the guise of Catholicism, but the very fact that he chose Catholicism in his analogy shows his opposition to the system.

Closely associated with the idea of human freedom is another emphasis in Dostoyevsky—the will of man. Throughout his novels man's will is seen as more important than his intellect. Many of his heroes are evil not because they act out of ignorance but because they will to be such. Dostoyevsky shows himself to be against any system, science, or philosophy which seeks to change man and better society by the improvement of man's intellect. This is reflected in the following paragraph from *The Possessed*:

> Not a single nation . . . has ever been founded on principles of science or reason. There has never been an example of it, except for a brief moment, through folly. Socialism is from its very nature bound to be atheism, seeing that it has from the first proclaimed that it is an atheistic organization of society, and that it intends to establish itself exclusively on the elements of science and reason. Science and reason have, from the beginning of time, played a secondary and subordinate part in the life of nations; so it will be till the end of time. Nations are built up and moved by another force which dominates them. . . .[13]

Man does not "live and move and have his very being" by reason alone. His will drives him to be what he is.

Still another concept which is bound up with human freedom in Dostoyevsky is man's spiritual nature. He speaks of the spiritual principle which gives drive, motivation, and meaning to all of man's activities. This view is in direct opposition to the philosophies of Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche which do not recognize man as a spiritual being.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky died in 1882 leaving to the world a large host of literature. He was a man and as a man he was no doubt in error on many points. But the value of Dostoyevsky is not to be denied. His great contribution to the world is his emphasis on radical human freedom. In contrast to all deterministic philosophies—economic, materialistic, or psychological—Dostoyevsky asserts that man is a free moral and spiritual agent. He is capable of making ultimate moral and spiritual decisions which determine his destiny for good or for evil. He is good or evil because he chooses to be so.

[10]Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot* (New York: Bantam Books, 1958), p. 527.
[11]Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed,* p. 266.
[12]Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 292ff.
[13]Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed,* pp. 267-268.

WHAT HAPPENED IN WICHITA

By ROBERT R. MEYERS

During the past year the Riverside Church of Christ in Wichita, Kansas, has received publicity in the pages of the *Firm Foundation* and the *Gospel Guardian,* in several church bulletins, and in a number of "open letters" circulated by individual preachers who were concerned about Riverside's welfare. The following account of what has happened in Wichita during the past two and one-half years is not meant so much as an answer to the articles named above as it is an attempt to show how tragically Christian brethren may be divided where the legalistic spirit is allowed dominance over the spirit of Christ.

This is not a new story. Churches of Christ are split in every major city in America, and in most of the villages. But it is especially appropriate that the Riverside story be told, because this congregation has a long and honorable history. It has been ministered to by men called "sound" and by men whose names loom large in Church of Christ honor rolls. Yet this congregation, one of the oldest in a city of 250,000, is today not permitted to list its services in the composite newspaper advertisement sponsored by several other Churches of Christ. It has been publicly disfellowshipped in two congregations, and tacitly disfellowshipped by others. It has been catapulted from grace in a remarkably swift and effective way, and the most incredible tales have been told about it. The true story should be told so that thoughtful Christians may ponder long upon the spirit which orthodox Church of Christism breeds in its adherents.

In complex human problems the error is never wholly on one side. Both sides made mistakes in the Wichita tragedy. But the greater guilt can be ascertained, and some judgment as to the grosser errors can be made. This essay proceeds on the assumption that an honest and objective student of what happened in Wichita can reach conclusions as to what the most harmful mistakes were.

No person deeply involved in such events can be expected to be completely objective. The writer promises to try to the best of his ability, but alerts his readers to watch carefully for signs of defensive posture and rationalization. Where they are detected, the reader should make the necessary adjustments.

Since it is not the purpose of this report to create hatred for any individuals, no one will be identified by name. Riverside has no interest in retaliating against persons who have injured her. They are simply people, like ourselves. Quite as sincere as any of us, they were sure they were doing the right thing. But the religious *attitudes* which victimized these persons, we abhor with all our hearts. However convinced some of our brothers in Wichita were that Riverside was a threat to orthodoxy, the techniques used to stifle Riverside were an outrage to Christian conduct and to human decency. We call for a religious attitude which would end such conduct among brethren in Christ who differ. We believe that a better spirit is not only possible, but already in existence in many places among our own brethren, and we believe that it is growing gloriously and triumphantly on many fronts.

Some of the incidents which led to Riverside's being isolated in Wichita are almost incredible. In the following pages they will be described for the first time in public. Many of Riverside's own members know only a few of them, since they were never discussed from the pulpit. It is probable that all of us here were unwise in remaining publicly quiet as long as we did about the pressures being brought to bear upon us. But our hope that the attack would diminish in vigor and increase in accuracy was not realized. If local pressures have dropped a little, the remote misrepresentations grow in wildness. So it seems best to put these facts in print and give readers who wish to do so a chance for making comparisons.

In early spring of 1960, the writer was asked to serve the Riverside congregation as a minister. Believing that one may best search out and speak the truth when his financial health does not depend on his always saying the "right" things, I agreed to come only if I were employed by one of the universities in Wichita. This was quickly and happily agreed upon, and my labor was to begin in the fall of 1960, at the expiration of a contract I had with Harding College.

Between this agreement and the beginning of its fulfillment, several months intervened. One of the alert deacons at Riverside had a correspodence with a friend of his who was on the Bible faculty at Harding. The friend advised him that my views were heretical and set them forth in detail. Acting exactly as a group of Christians should do in such a matter, the Riverside leaders mailed the charges to me and asked for a point-by-point reply. I happily made such a reply, feeling that this was a splendid opportunity to present any potentially controversial views I held and to do so many months before my association with Riverside was to begin.

After careful study of many pages of charges, and my own many pages of reply, the Riverside leaders wrote to say that they were completely satisfied. The deacon who initiated the correspondence later became so strong a supporter of the Riverside position that he gave up a good job and moved to another state rather than submit to the request that he denounce this congregation. But before this happened, and while he was still dubious, two Wichita ministers told him that they would "run that fellow out of town in six months." To the truth of these statements, probably made in semi-seriousness, the deacon has since given witness in print.

During the first few months of the writer's association with Riverside, all of us were excited about visible progress. Attendance set records, contributions climbed, and we talked of the need for extra seating. But during this period the writer was striking out sharply at prejudices, in whatever form, and trying to get people to think clearly and honestly about the Bible. Inconsistencies in Church of Christ interpretations of God's word were occasionally touched upon. And as these comments reached others in Wichita, particularly among preachers who were anticipating them, troubles began. Those who profit from tradition, either in terms of money or prestige, cannot bear to see it questioned. All who like to say, "We have *The Truth*," are upset when a colleague points out ways in which we are sorely defective.

All church groups have problems. Methodists face the problem of theological vagueness, and many of my Methodist friends openly admit this. Unitarians face the problem of intellectual snobbery and complete severance from uniquely Christian ideas, and Unitarian friends have candidly confessed to this. The besetting sin of our own people in the Church of Christ is Pharisaism, self-righteousness, exclusivism. We elevate our own understanding of the Bible to an infallible authoritarianism. We minimize our own defects, hide our own inconsistencies, and pounce gleefully upon those of other religious groups wherever we can discover them. This is Pharisaism, the deadliest sin described in the New Testament. The extraordinary reaction against such an attack is probably the clearest proof that it is urgently needed in the Church of Christ.

But even so, it is likely that disagreements would not have assumed major proportions had it not been for one incident. When the gun is loaded and cocked, someone still must pull the trigger. It was pulled in Wichita when one of our members decided she did not like to hear criticism of Church of Christ failings, and left us. She had been disappointed, for other reasons, in several Wichita congregations and had moved about considerably in previous years. She is a woman who has done many good works and given generously of her money. It is one of her deepest sorrows that she has never been able to win most of her family to membership in the Church of Christ. She is a sincere woman, almost incredibly zealous for the superiority of the Church of Christ to all other religious groups. Emotionally torn by failure to win many of her loved ones to her views, she could not bear to hear in her home church the very criticisms which some of these loved ones had leveled in their own defense. Desperately in need of the security of an authoritarian religion, she could not relinquish it. Departure was the only thing left. Departure, and the most vigorous protests she could make.

Had this woman spoken only the criticisms actually made from the pulpit at Riverside, most Wichita preachers would have been incensed. But to the actual rebukes against Church of Christ narrowness, she added the inevitable distortions of a bitterly unhappy person. Words of praise for Church of Christ contributions, and words of modification to many of the criticisms, were not related at all as she blazoned her grievances about the city. Acquainted with most preachers in Wichita, she went to various ones with her reports of what was happening at Riverside. It was not long before we began to hear of group meetings of preachers, and soon Riverside was faced with an ultimatum. In effect, it was that Riverside could keep the Maude Carpenter Children's Home, which it had founded and operated for many years, only if the present minister were fired. If he were kept, financial support of the Home would begin to drop off. The preachers declared that they would not permit brethren to support a Home whose children attended the Riverside services and heard "heresy." The threat was not idle. Financial support of the Home dropped abruptly. The superintendent reported a $4,000 decrease in the very month in which the ultimatum became clearly known to us.

At a business meeting, Riverside members acknowledged that the Home could not be operated without the complete support of congregations in Wichita and in the Southwest. It was clear that the congregation could not retain the writer and expect to operate the Home as well.

I urged all present to make a permanent decision, reminding them that the time was propitious for me to seek another college teaching job. I stressed the point that within a few weeks, it would be impossible to break my Friends University teaching contract before an entire school term had passed. Had I known then how acrimonious the disagreement would become, I would have left voluntarily. Later, when Riverside members had proved their faith in more charitable religious attitudes by their sacrificial loyalty, it became utterly impossible to desert them.

Everyone present refused to consider this alternative, however, feeling that Riverside Christians should be allowed to make their own judgments about what was truth. There was a general feeling that the Home needed to be placed under a larger church anyway, and although we disliked being *forced* to do this, we agreed that this was the course to follow.

Riverside's emotional ties with the Children's Home were understandably strong. For some fifteen years it had carried the chief burden of supporting the Home administratively. Then suddenly, sister churches declared that the children must go to an "orthodox" Church of Christ and be saved from hearing "heresies" each Sunday. One minister in Wichita considered sending some of his older women to the Home to counsel individually with the children and try to save them from the effects of Riverside's religious approach. Perhaps the saddest irony in all this is that the children had been compelled to attend so many services of Churches of Christ all over Wichita that most of them had learned how *not* to listen to sermons at all! Compulsory religion had had the effect upon them which it has on many other people.

Riverside's members, competent and intelligent people with a wide range of professional and vocational skills, were puzzled and pained by such an ultimatum. The implication was clear that Wichita preachers felt Riverside members were either incapable of judging sermons for themselves, or that they did not sufficiently care whether what they heard was truth or error. We felt, on the contrary, that Riverside Christians knew the difference between truth and falsehood without the help of Wichita preachers. We also felt that we cared deeply about right and wrong. It seemed to us that it was a serious violation of congregational independence for a group of preachers to try to force their views upon us.

One thought which occurred often to us was this: Riverside had been ministered to by a long succession of highly endorsed, "sound" and "orthodox" preachers. This had gone on for many years. The names read like a roll call of some of the most eminent among us. Had it occurred to our friends to wonder how it was that all these years of indoctrination by the "soundest" men had suddenly been overturned in a few months by someone unknown? Was truth all so delicate as this suggested? Was the pernicious error of believing in the

sincerity and goodness of men who differ with us religiously so powerful that it could undo in a few months what good gospel preachers had worked on so laboriously for fifteen years?

Or was it rather that people at Riverside were, in general, emotionally and intellectually ready to throw off the old exclusivism and Pharisaism, and required only a convinced voice from the pulpit to rally them? I cannot compare with many of my dissident brethren in persuasiveness and personal charm. It had to be the truth and essential decency of our position which appealed to Riverside's members. Their minds simply accepted what experience had been urging them toward for years, and their testimony is that they are far happier and more effective Christians now. They have changed no practice known to Churches of Christ, but they have changed their attitudes toward those who believe differently, and they will never go back to the narrow and loveless ways of exclusivism.

The Riverside elders thought, after discussion of the ultimatum about the Home, that it would be helpful to hold a five-night meeting so that local ministers who could not visit at other times might have a chance to hear the Riverside speaker and determine whether the "heresay" was as bad as rumor made it. Hundreds of personal invitations were mailed. *Not a single minister involved in issuing the ultimatum attended the meetings, despite the fact that not a single one of them had ever heard the man they were accusing!* They were apparently willing to continue their campaign of pressure on the basis of heresay evidences. The reader can imagine how hard it was for Christians at Riverside to understand the unwillingness of Wichita preachers to come, for even one time, and hear a sermon from the Riverside pulpit.

A few visitors came from other Church of Christ congregations and the response of most was a mild surprise that the sermons sounded so much like those they were accustomed to hearing. They detected no heresies. A few, however, may have felt as a visiting elder did. Asked if he had heard anything heretical, he replied that he had not, but added that the minister had doubtless seen him walk in and had changed the sermon. After a moment's thought, he said: "Oh yes, there is one thing. He kept talking tonight about the inner man and the outer man. Now I know about that outer man, but I never heard about any inner man. That doesn't sound like good old-fashioned gospel preaching to me." This man is a pleasant fellow, who probably would never harm anyone deliberately, but of his ability to detect heresy the reader must judge. He had spent a lifetime serving as an overseer of the flock, but had apparently never encountered Ephesians 3:16. Sometime later, he led the Christians under his pastorate into a boycott of all things connected with Riverside.

As the preachers continued to meet about the city, and as reports came to us of their various plans for forcing us to yield to their views, it became ever clearer that we must try to expedite the slow legal arrangements being made to transfer the Home. Meanwhile, the campaign against Riverside took many forms. Some of the Wichita preachers insisted that we be publicly disfellowshipped, with pulpit announcements and insertions in church journals. Soberer

heads demurred, doubting that scriptural precedent could be found for such action and not quite so convinced as were two or three others that Riverside's "heresy" was that dark. No joint action was taken. Two or three preachers denounced Riverside from their pulpits, said we could no longer be fellowshipped, and warned their members against attending our services. We have since had a number of people place membership with us from these congregations.

In September of 1961, the Riverside congregation printed several hundred copies of the following letter. It should be read carefully, since it summarizes so well the essential differences between Riverside and her sister congregations. It went as follows:

Dear Friend,

Our effort at Riverside to study God's word without prejudices or fears, and to follow truth where it clearly leads, has caused some misunderstanding among Churches of Christ in Wichita. Because we are trying to create what we believe is a more Christian *attitude,* some have thought that we were set to change Christian *practices.* This is not true, but because of misrepresentations of our true position, we feel it is imperative for you to know exactly what is true and what is not.

We feel that the plea of the Church of Christ has been crippled often by narrowness and bigotry on the part of many of its supporters. We want to create a better attitude toward those who honestly differ with us. We believe in their sincerity and intelligence, just as we believe in our own. Believing that we must stand for what we see as right, we try to communicate our own best understanding of God's word to them, but we do not pass judgment upon them nor assume that we alone are always infallible.

This position, which we think to be Christian, is mistakenly called "modernism" by some of our fellow Christians in Wichita. The term "modernism" is inflammatory and is used in so many different ways that we deplore its use, and urge our friends to stop labeling and try to be better informed about what we are really standing for.

We believe that we should be as true to the Bible as we can. We believe that we should keep our minds open and receptive to truth, so that any errors we fall into can be corrected. We know that Bible truth gets overlaid at times with men's deductions and inferences, and we want to be careful to distingiush between the clear commandments of God and the arbitrary interpretations of men.

Simple and logical as this position may seem, it has disturbed some and has made them believe that we are going far beyond these intentions. We are not. The present minister at Riverside has for 22 years preached the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the necessity of the church, the oneness of the true church, and faith, repentance, and baptism as the New Testament law of pardon for alien sinners.

He does not advocate the introduction of an instrument of music into the worship, the abolishing of weekly communion, the practice of open membership, nor sprinkling and pouring as substitutes for immersion, although all these have been irresponsibly charged.

Since it is impossible to anticipate all misunderstandings, or guess what charges may come from those who do not know what we are doing, we ask you to bring your questions to anyone in this congregation and satisfy your mind about our emphasis. We believe that what we are doing is greatly needed, and that you will strongly support it. We invite you to search the Scriptures courageously with us, and enjoy the challenge of studying God's will without fear or bias. It is a stimulating experience, and one which we all believe is pleasing to God. We welcome you heartily to such a commitment as this.

All Riverside Members

The statements in this letter were labored over carefully. Not a single one of them is false to views held at Riverside. They are as comprehensive as we could make them in such a letter. The statements directly refute certain direct charges—charges which were flagrantly false. Riverside has never planned to order an organ, abolish weekly communion, practice open membership, and so forth, and the quickest answer to such irresponsible charges is a resounding negative. It is certainly true that Riverside Christians do not consider the use of an instrument, or the *frequency* of observance of the Lord's Supper, as matters of law, but this does not invalidate the truth of the statements made. We cannot talk helpfully to men about where commandment and tradition meet until we have first gotten rid of inflammatory charges which upset them so much that they cannot listen to reason.

The campaign went on. Having failed so far to remove the Riverside speaker, some now tried to remove his audience. A telephone campaign began. Riverside members were called, many of them repeatedly, and urged to leave their fellowship so that no one would be left to support "that heresy." Old friends of Riverside people, in other congregations, pled with them to leave. Urged on by preachers who had never been in a Riverside worship service, they were sometimes tearful. Relatives exercised the strong powers of family loyalty to win cousins, brothers, nephews, aunts and uncles away. The campaign was partially successful. Over several months, perhaps some twenty-five adults left. It was impossible to know whether all left for the theological reasons which they gave. Some were weary of quarrels in years past, some wanted a livelier social life than this small congregation afforded, and some disliked comments made about the sin of racial discriminations. At any rate, for a time it was uncertain whether Riverside could continue to meet as an independent and strong group.

My wife and I were harrassed by telephone calls in which the caller would ring but say nothing when answered. There would be a long, living silence. This went on for months. It happened as many as twenty and thirty times in a day, and occurred as late as 1:30 and 3:30 a.m. I remember five phone calls during the space of a noon meal. Since the calls also came to the church office in the same way, we supposed they were connected with the campaign to remove heresy from Wichita, but we could not be sure of this, of course. We still get these calls occasionally, but they are not a great nuisance.

At one point, the chorus of a Bible chair at a nearby state university wanted to visit us and sing in our building. Arrangements were completed by telephone, and announcements made from our pulpit and bulletin. But one of the leading preachers in Wichita heard about this and felt it his duty to intervene. He instructed the elders of the out-of-state church to keep their chorus away from Riverside. So, at the last moment, the leader of the chorus telephoned to tell me that his group could not disobey their elders and sing for us. He said that two carloads would come anyway to show that as individual Christians they disapproved of such tactics.

Those who have studied the New Testament will wonder where one could

find a precedent for such action. One wonders if "heresy" is so potent that it can undo, in one Sunday morning, what all the years of sound, orthodox preaching had built up in these college youngsters. One also wonders whether genuine Christian compassion might not have urged the chorus to come ahead, in hopes that our hearts would be softened and we would yield ourselves more readily to correction. Orthodoxy is fearful indeed when it will not even expose the gospel in song to those thought to be in error! It was difficult for Christians at Riverside to understand how this particular method of retaliation could be thought helpful or wise.

The next event involved a young man who had achieved noteworthy success as a director for Christian camps. He had held a camp in the state the year before, but received an offer to head an eastern camp at higher salary and with greater possibilities for good. He was about to accept, when the board of the Kansas camp urged him not to do so. He agreed to stay, and gave up the eastern job. A short time later a Wichita preacher, representing the Kansas camp board, told him he would have to leave Riverside and denounce the minister there, or give up the Kansas job.

The young man refused to leave Riverside, or to denounce what he believed was an honest effort to teach God's word without party prejudices. As a result, he lost the job. It was too late for him to get other employment for the summer. No offer of financial renumeration was made. It seemed to Riverside that this was not a Christian solution.

Elders at Riverside worked three months trying to select a board of twelve men who would represent a wide diversity of professions and congregations in the city and state. When this board finally convened, one board member took the floor to state that the board itself was unscriptural and that he voted to disband it at once and turn the Home over to one of the larger congregations in Wichita. Since the man presumably believed that his position on the board was unscriptural when he accepted it, it appeared that he had taken it so that he might be in a position to make his motion. The irony was that Riverside had been perfectly willing all the time to turn the home over to another church, but had been unable to learn who would be willing to take it.

Word circulated that the staff at the Home would have to stop worshipping God at Riverside if they were to keep their jobs after the transfer. This did not apply to one or two members of "denominational" churches who were employed at the Home. They were allowed to keep their jobs and their church affiliations. House parents who believed in the believer's right to study God's word according to conscience were upset. It was impossible for them to feel the security they required for their great responsibility, and most of them decided to go elsewhere for jobs rather than submit.

The superintendent was given notice to seek employment elsewhere, and did so. It should be said that he was given fair treatment by the elders of Wichita's Cleveland Avenue congregation, who saw to it that he had adequate time to find a new position. The elders of this congregation were moderate in handling the thorny problem which they inherited. A debt of gratitude is

owed to them because of the splendid way in which they assumed charge of the Home, and the way in which they are now working to make it an effective center for Christian concern. It is another example of a truth which many have learned: that *congregational elders are almost always surprisingly humane and decent when not under the domination of preachers.* Preachers are sensitive to position and prestige, especially since they are hired to represent party positions. Elders are independent, financially, and tend to react more calmly to alleged threats to orthodoxy. Riverside is happy to know that the work of many years is being carried on energetically and effectively by elders of the above named church.

An experienced and trained counsellor, brought to the Home from another state, had proved a valuable addition but he, too, took another position rather than face the prospect of a direct purge. He is now a counsellor in a public school system. His experience is probably lost forever to Church of Christ children's homes.

Two secretaries of many years of service were next to go. One, whose competence as bookkeeper and secretary at the Home has been highly praised, is the wife of a Riverside elder. She had been at the Home more than a dozen years, and it will take someone else years to learn what she knew. But facing the purge, she felt it necessary to sever her connections with the Home and take a job at the city library. The other lady was the wife of the Home's most influential single personage, a former elder of Riverside, now deceased. She was told to seek other employment, since she could not continue to be a secretary and handle office functions while she attended Riverside. So potent is "heresy" that it contaminates typewriters, files, and the sorting of gifts. This lady now works at a branch of the YMCA.

Others, including house parents and dieticians and cooks, have also resigned rather than stop attending Riverside. A very few staff members, recently hired and feeling no strong commitment to Riverside, chose to change their membership and continue to work at the Home. There is not a shred of animosity toward these good people on the part of anyone here. They are doing a good work.

During this time we received a postcard from the minister in Wichita who was responsible for the composite church advertisement in the Saturday paper. His note was peremptory. He said that as of the following Saturday the name Riverside would no longer appear. Since this was clearly a public action, tantamount to a disfellowshipping, we decided we should quiz all local elders to determine whether they agreed with this action. We mailed over 60 letters, pleading for a reply to what seemed to us a crucial question of Christian ethics. We received six cards back, two approving the action, two condemning it, and two saying they would wait and report after a business meeting (which they failed to do so).

After a time, we decided that since we had been arbitrarily cut out of the composite advertisement, we should take our program to the public on our own. One member paid immediately for several months of newspaper space,

allowing for a 250-word article each week. Another paid for several months of radio time on a local station. The radio sermons are too long to repeat, but a sample of the newspaper copy follows:

> Any group of convinced religionists has a hard time being completely fair to those whose doctrines are different. It is temptingly easy to discover only the defects of others, and to publicize them gleefully, while keeping very quiet about similar faults in ourselves, and magnifying our strengths.
>
> As members of the Church of Christ, we know perfectly well how badly marred our own history has been by unfairness to other religious groups. We have too often seized upon some public failure among members of differing groups and intimated that such was the inevitable consequence of improper interpretation of the true religion!
>
> At Riverside, we deplore this party narrowness. We know that one does not prove the inferiority of another religion by falling with unholy glee upon the human failures of people within it. We do not intend to profess such horror at the shortcomings of others, when we are only men ourselves and often fall beneath the high standards we should like to hold.
>
> We refuse to see in the faults of others a proof of their duplicity, while we easily excuse similar defects in ourselves. We feel it is better for men to be busy curing their own sicknesses than to go about with microscopes searching for germs in others. Or, to put it much better, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and fail to notice the plank in your own?" (Matt. 7:2)

When a Wichita minister later wrote a lengthy response to a group of these newspaper articles, he made this explanation: "Later when relations became more strained between Riverside and many of the other congregations in the city, the brethren at Riverside evidently thought it was wise to express themselves and they chose the newspaper and the radio as mediums through which this was to be accomplished." This brother did not say that it was only after his arbitrary action *forced* Riverside to strike out on its own did it "choose the newspaper and the radio." We should still be paying our part of the composite advertisement if his action had not been taken.

When we began to make public our plea for a more charitable approach to those who differed with us, many of our brethren in other congregations complained that we were holding the church up to ridicule and letting the "denominations" know that we were having trouble. It was hard for us to avoid the impression that any kind of action was all right, so long as it was directed against us in our "heresy" but any attempt to put our own side before the public was an outrage against decency. We have been unable to accept such logic.

The result of the newspaper and radio work was that a number of people who had stopped attending the Church of Christ because of its attitude toward other religionists began attending at Riverside. Some came from other Churches of Christ, stating that Riverside had exactly what they had yearned for through many years of partisan strife and bigotry. Among these are some of the most energetic, loyal and devoted Christians now in our group.

The human system cannot stand constant excitement and inevitably the overt actions began to diminish somewhat. Riverside did not simply dry up and blow away. It rallied from the first heavy blows, and began to rebuild. It now has the same number of adults it had before the Exodus, as we term it here, although the loss of some 60 children from the Home left some empty

seats. Since there was nothing else vulnerable after the Home had been taken away, the advertisement dropped from the paper, and brotherly contacts removed, we were left in relative peace.

We are still occasionally surprised. A faculty member at one of our nearby Christian colleges no longer visits in our home, despite a close friendship of many years' standing. He was told by the president that his job would be in jeopardy if he continued making "those trips to Wichita." He ceased to make them.

Another piece of advice was given to one of our members by a prominent Bible faculty member in a Texas school. The young man was a student, and had not often been in our services for the past few years. The Bible professor told him that he must not "let it get around that you have *any* connection with them, or you'll not be able to get a job in any Church of Christ in the brotherhood." The young man is torn now between two desires. He would like to preach, but admits that if he did he would say many of the things which have caused Riverside grief. "I would preach much the way you do," he says, "and if I did that, would I be able to get a job?" Told that he would inevitably have trouble, because he would buck well-organized system of guardians of orthodoxy, he wonders whether he should enter another field of service.

We hear rumors now and then that "Riverside has gone 'anti' and is opposed to children's homes." This is probably because we no longer have the Home, and people who do not know that it was taken from us by threat have apparently supposed that we gave it up because of a change of policy about child care. We are currently assuming college tutition expenses for two boys who grew up in that Home. It is one of the largest programs of its kind we have ever attempted.

Perhaps the most amazing action taken recently to silence the Riverside voice occurred near the end of the summer. The minister who dropped us from the newspaper advertisement wrote a letter, while I was teaching in Florida, to the president of Friends University. He told the president that he could no longer support Friends because of the activities of one of its faculty members. Without specifying in the letter what the activities were, he included information which left no doubt as to the teacher's identity. By not spelling out in his letter what these "activities" were, he left it up to the president to wonder whether I was simply a Church of Christ maverick, or perhaps a moral or ethical reprobate who ought to be discharged at once.

The president, fortunately, had had some experience with our people before and understood the tactics which legalism employs when it is goaded. He showed me the letter, assured me of my position, and let me read the reply sent to the Church of Christ minister. I said nothing to the minister and if he reads this it will be his first knowledge that I read his letter and know of his action. I am trying to believe that he can be excused because of his strong convictions, but judged coldly his action seems reprehensible. He is a better man than this action would suggest. Apparently he felt the need to make a last-ditch effort to get Riverside's influence lessened, even if it meant collaboration with a "denominational" college, where he believes falsehood is taught

daily, to do it. Surely legalism is indicted when it can justify such action in the name of Christ.

So far as is known to me, no one at Riverside has retaliated in kind. We have repeatedly encouraged one another to prove the validity of our course by our conduct. No amount of Bible quoting or pious protestations about orthodoxy can take the place of true Christian action. We go about our business quietly, trying to make each service at Riverside a thing of beauty and dignity, pleasing to God and uplifting to men.

We go right on preaching and practicing baptism by immersion for initiation into God's kingdom. We accept no one into fellowship who has not been immersed into Christ. We sing, as always, without an organ. We take the Lord's Supper weekly. All is as it has been, except that we refuse to deride and ridicule those who differ with us, and we believe that men are accountable to God in terms of their opportunities and their ability to know his will. For this conviction, we now stand alone in Wichita.

Yet not alone, really. For letters have flowed in to us from all over the country, praising this stand and giving us encouragement. Many sent checks as tangible proof of support. Many lifelong members and ministers of the Church of Christ write that more charitable attitudes toward those who interpret differently from ourselves had to come and will spread everywhere as time passes.

We recognize this problem, that people do not see the monstrousness of an attitude until they have begun to reject it. The average member of the Church of Christ is a kindly person, highly respectable, middle class, quite unaware of the repugnance with which most of the religious world views his authoritarian religious position. To tell him that his personal life is splendid, but that his dogma is in some ways monstrous and inhuman, is to fail utterly to reach him. But more travel and broader education is awakening him slowly to what thoughtful, sincere, compassionate men in other religious groups have already learned. Exclusivism and the conviction of infallible interpretation will one day cease to be a prominent feature of his religion. Thousands in the Church of Christ are profoundly disturbed already, and apathy when their preachers speak the time-honored bromides and platitudes.

In the meantime, those of us who are brothers in Christ but who differ about some matters, can adopt an approach toward one another which will diminish the harm of our disagreement. We can overwhelm one another with love and concern, instead of with secretive insinuations and underhanded machinations. We can immerse one another in kindness, visiting and talking in brotherly caring. There is no question but that this issue of how we shall view those whose religious interpretations are different from our own will loom ever larger through the coming years. A shrinking world and ever increasing educational possibilities absolutely guarantee this. We must find ways to share our opposing views without creating more factions. We must, at long last, learn how to differ from one another in mutual love and respect. Our prayer at Riverside is that God will lead us ahead into fields of greater Christian service than we have ever known, and that He will lead us *together.*

UNITY FORUM IN DALLAS

June 30 - July 7

Wynnewood Christian Chapel, 2303 S. Tyler St., Dallas, Texas will conduct a Unity Forum during the week of July 4th. Wynnewood is a free and independent congregation of the Restoration Movement, desiring to be Christians only, while realizing they are not the only Christians. The disciples that meet at the Chapel desire the fellowship of all immersed believers in the Christ.

Since the congregation does not lay down disfellowshiping laws or require any man to subscribe to its own interpretations of scripture, it can consistently invite all disciples of Christ to share in its programs.

This Unity Forum will, therefore, be open to all groups that claim any historical connection with the Restoration Movement. Every person who attends will have opportunity to share in the discussions. Special invitations are being extended to disciples from all parts of the Church of Christ-Christian Church brotherhood. This will include leaders from liberal and conservative Church of Christ, independent Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, premillennialists, one-cup, no-classes, wine only, etc., etc.

No one has ever been jailed for sharing in a program at the Chapel. Moreover, we predict an irenic spirit throughout and the very best of brotherly relations. We are convinced that a "sweet reasonableness" will prevail throughout as brethren sit together in an effort to understand each other better.

We would like to know if you plan to attend. Further announcements will be forthcoming. Address Alton Marlowe, 107 Mt. Ararat, Dallas, Texas, if you plan to be with us.

RESTORATION REVIEW, Volume 5, begins with the next issue. Among the subjects covered in this issue will be an examination of some of the scriptures that we believe are abused in an effort to defend "disfellowshiping laws" that alienate and divide brethren. The series on *The Search for the Good Man* will continue. We will appreciate your prompt renewal, which is but $1.00. Why not make it $5.00 and thereby send the journal to four of your friends who are interested in a larger fellowship of God's people?